

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office action dated September 27, 2011 has been received and carefully considered. By this amendment, the specification and claims 1 and 11 are amended. No new claims were added. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-20 will be pending. In view of the amendments and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration.

35 USC §103

The Office rejected claims 1-5, 8-9, 11-15, and 18-19 under 35 USC §103(a) as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of applicant's admitted prior art. The applicant respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

(a) Pointing to the heat exchanger 13 in Figure 10 of Wilkinson, the office appeared to argue that Wilkinson would teach a combination of the fractionator bottom product and liquefied natural gas vapor as the bottom product stream and stream 43 are in heat exchange. Applicant can not agree with such position.

First, the fractionator feed as presently claimed must be a combination of two distinct components, a vapor stream from the storage vessel and the bottom product. Heat exchange between two streams is simply not a combination of the two streams. Second, stream 43 in Wilkinson is not a vapor from the vapor port of the storage vessel, but vaporized liquid from the liquid port of the storage vessel.

To even more clearly denote that the combination of the streams is a mixture of the streams, applicant amended the term "combination" to read --mixture-- and the term "combining" into --mixing--. Such mixture/step of mixing is neither taught nor suggested in Wilkinson, alone or in any combination with AAPA.

(b) With respect to the examiner's statement that AAP would teach separate withdrawal of a liquefied natural gas liquid and a liquefied natural gas vapor from the storage vessel (FIG. 1) in order to provide previously separated streams of LNG to the fractionator without having to use additional heat exchanger to condense/evaporate vapor or liquid LNG, the following is noted: First, AAPA does not provide previously separated streams of LNG to the

fractionator. There is simply no separator. On the contrary, AAPA teaches a vapor absorber. Second it is entirely unclear what the office intends to express with the phrase "...without having to use additional heat exchanger to condense/evaporate vapor or liquid LNG..." AAPA fails to indicate any need for additional heat exchanger as AAPA already has a vapor condenser and downstream vaporizer. Clarification is respectfully requested should AAPA be maintained.

For at least the above arguments and amendment, the rejection of claims 1-5, 8-9, 11-15, and 18-19 as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of AAPA should be withdrawn.

The Office also rejected claims 6-7, and 16-17 under 35 USC §103 as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of Zednik (U.S. Pat. No. 6,089,022) and applicant's admitted prior art. The applicant again respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

Similar to the defects noted for Wilkinson in combination with AAPA above, the rejection of claims 6-7, and 16-17 is not sustainable in light of the amendments and arguments above. A combination with Zednik fails to remedy these defects. Therefore, claims 6-7, and 16-17 should not be deemed obvious over Wilkinson and Zednik in view of AAPA and the rejection should be withdrawn.

Request For Allowance

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. The applicant requests allowance of all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
Fish & Associates, PC

Date: December 22, 2011

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